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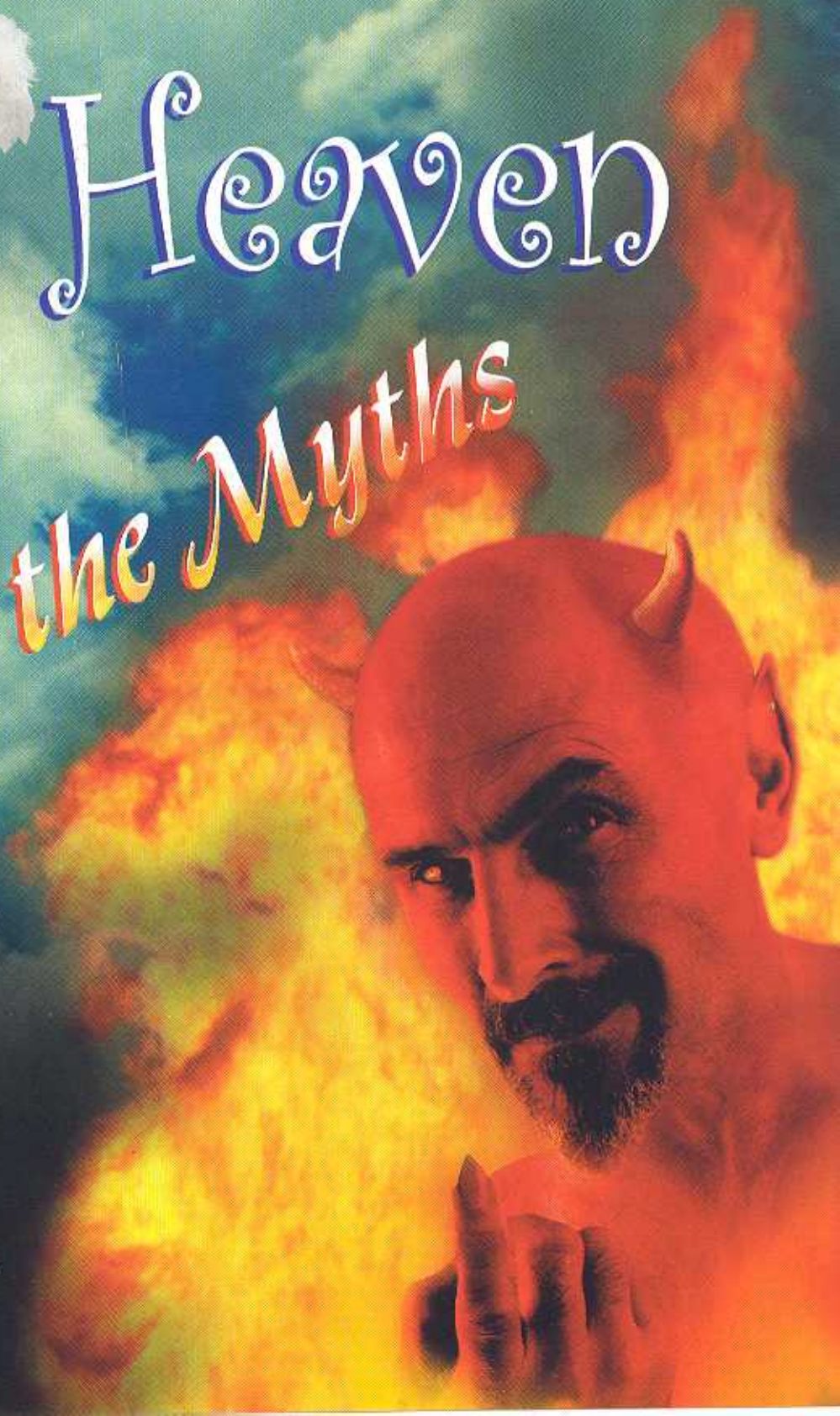
Issue 13



Heaven

Exposing the Myths

Hell



Hour Times

contents

Hour Times

Editor
JAY
GALLIMORE

Associate Editor
DWIGHT HALL

Assistant Editor
CARI HAUS

Design Layout
EDDIE
HERNANDEZ

Graphics Design
PENNY HALL
and
EDDIE
HERNANDEZ

Marketing
Representatives
ROYCE SNYMAN
and
SCOTT ERB

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Publications

Cover:
Photo's by Photo Disc
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FEATURES

The Fast Lane to Hell..... 9



Is Jimmy an Angel? 14



DEPARTMENTS & COLUMNS

Editorial..... 3 Lifestyle Matters..... 12

Words of Hope and Encouragement 4 Recipes 13

Berean Corner 8

COVER STORY

A Turning Point



5

BACK ISSUES



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Our Mission:

Hour Times, published by Remnant Publications, a nonprofit organization, is produced for the sole purpose of leading individuals, families and society to "A Better Way of Life," as found through God's Holy Word, the Bible. We believe that the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God, its principles and counsel are as relevant and binding upon humanity today as they have been throughout the ages.



Is Heaven for Real?

By Cari Haus

It's always interesting to hear what the pope has to say on any given subject. This is particularly true when the topic is heaven, since so many of us hope to go there someday.

In case you haven't heard, the pope made some interesting comments about heaven in recent months. According to the July 24, 1999, issue of *Daily Mail*, Pope John Paul II says that heaven is not "a physical place among the clouds." Rather, it's a "living and personal relationship with the Holy Trinity."

Apparently the pope takes a similar view of hell, for he also told a Vatican audience that "rather than a place, hell indicates the state of those who freely and definitely separate themselves from God."

According to the January 31, 2000, issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, the majority of Americans would agree with the pope on these issues.

"Hell Harh No Fury," trumpeted the headline of the lead article, which went on to say that fire and brimstone are out of fashion, for modern thinking says, "the netherworld isn't so hot after all."

Most people now believe that hell is more of a "deep funk than a pit of fire," writes Jeffery L. Sheler. "While the traditional infernal imagery still attracts a following, modern visions of eternal perdition as a particularly unpleasant solitary confinement are beginning to emerge, suggesting that hell may not be so hot after all."

Some theologians quoted in the article called hell "cartoonish," a "blemish to be covered up by the cosmetic of divine love" and "about as politically incorrect a concept as one can find." A survey cited in the article said that only 34% of Americans now believe that hell is a real place where people suffer eternal fiery torments. This is in comparison to 48% just two years ago. In the words of one scholar, "Once we discovered we could create hell on earth, it became silly to talk about it in a literal sense."

Unfortunately, these widespread beliefs about heaven and hell reflect a broad trend by much of the Christian world to mystify more and more of the Bible.

Could it be that in this age of creative theology and "advanced interpretations," that we as Christians may still take the Word of God simply, as a little child? Is it really too much to believe exactly what He says, just as He says it? Aren't there many Bible passages that admonish us simply to believe?

A MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE


Perhaps the greatest danger in making heaven and/or hell into mystical places is that somehow, in that process, our own Christian experiences may become "mystical" or nonsubstantive as well. The idea that there is a heaven to win and a hell to shun does have motivational power. And, while fear of punishment or expectation of bliss should not be our prime motivations as Christians, the biblical foundations for these beliefs are very literal.

My Bible speaks of a heavenly city with walls of jasper, streets of gold, a sparkling river, a tree of life and throne of God. It also describes a "lake of fire" (Rev. 19:20, NKJV), which can only be literal, for it results in the death of the wicked.

As humans who have only laid eyes on this blighted old world, it *is* hard for us to imagine a "heaven," but that doesn't make it any less real, because the Bible says it *is* real. In the words of the old song, "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it for me."

A MYSTICAL CHINA?

Although I've traveled a fair amount in my lifetime, I've never been to Beijing, China. They tell me it's a very large city, and I believe it—though I've never been there. They tell me the streets are bustling with people—and I believe that too—though I've never been there. They tell me there is a unique oriental culture in Beijing—and I believe that too, though I've never been there.

The same is true for heaven. Our Lord has told us that it is large, gorgeous, life-filled and happy. That there's a custom-designed mansion waiting there for you and me. I believe Him, and though I've never been there, I plan to go soon. How about you? 

The idea that there is a heaven to win and a hell to shun does have motivational power.

**It will be worth it all when we see Jesus,
Life's trials will seem so small when we see Christ;
One glimpse of His dear face all sorrow will erase,
So bravely run the race till we see Christ.**
—Esther Kerr Rusthoi

Percent of Americans who say they believe in heaven: 90%

Percent of Americans who say they believe in hell: 50-75%—William R. Mattox, Jr., *Hell Deserves As Much Respect As Heaven*

“Heaven is for sinners who want to spend eternity with God, while hell is for sinners who want to spend eternity apart from God.”—Jerry Walls, *Hell: The Logic of Damnation* (in Mattox)

“Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”—Jesus, in John 5:24 (NIV)

“To so many people heaven is a last resort. And as resorts go, heaven isn't a bad place.”—Keith Gray, *Adventist Review*

“I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the

new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ . . .

“No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and His servants will serve him. They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.”—John, in Revelation 21:1-4 and 22:3-5 (NIV)

“No one ever goes to heaven deservingly.”—C. S. Lewis (in Mattox)

There is singing up in heaven such as we have never known,

Where the angels sing the praises of the Lamb upon the throne;

Their sweet harps are ever tuneful and their voices always clear,

O that we might be more like them while we serve the Master here!

Holy, holy, is what the angels sing,

And I expect to help them make the courts of heaven ring;

But when I sing redemption's story, they will fold their wings,

For angels never felt the joys that our salvation brings.—Johnson Oatman, Jr.

“The earth was originally created to be the home of man, and when sin has forever been banished, it will fulfill its original purpose. For a while evil has reigned and Satan has had control. But it shall not ever be thus. God will make all things new. When that is done man will again have dominion, and the earth will blossom as the rose.”—M. L. Andreasen, *The Faith of Jesus*, 564

“If you gain heaven, you gain everything.”—Ellen White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, 88

We value the opinions and thoughts of our readers. Please share how *Hour Times* has made an impact on your life. Your feedback is essential to our success. Thank you.

Hour Times P.O. Box 426, Coldwater, MI 49036

A Turning Point



Photo by Advent Digital Media

By Judy Benjamin

Have you ever reached a point in your life where your future seemed ruined through one or more poor decisions? I have.

My saga began with an attractive job offer in Wyoming (a horse lover's dream). I was living in Iowa at the time, but this new opportunity sounded too good to refuse. So I quit my "high-paying" job (\$11.65 per hour was a pretty good wage in 1983). Then I moved out of my apartment and wrapped things up by selling most of my furniture. Unfortunately, that's when my Wyoming job suddenly fell through.

This left me with only one option: a New Hampshire job my brother had offered me three months before.

"There's *no way* I want to live *there*," had been my reaction. Yet, there I was—barely 90 days later—staring out the window of a plane as it landed in Boston.

Needless to say, I was devastated. Fresh off the farm, I had never even been in a big city before. With its bumper-to-bumper traffic, skyscrapers, buses and masses of people, my new home was a far cry from either the farm or Wyoming. Life in the city made me claustrophobic, and I hated it.

"What have I done?" I asked as I sank deeper and deeper into depression. I felt I had ruined my life, and I didn't smile for months.

A TURNING POINT

One day while walking down the street, I somehow felt drawn into a store. The words on the sign, which read *Country Life*, reminded me of the farm in Iowa. Stepping inside, I was surprised to see a familiar face by the counter. A friend of my brother was having a conversation with the store owner. However, it wasn't *who* was there so much as *what* was said that stopped me cold.

"Do you know what heaven will be like?" I heard the storeowner ask. Then she answered her own question, explaining that there wouldn't be any suffering, stress, depression or worry in heaven. "God never intended us to live like this," she said.

I could hardly believe my ears!

"What can she mean?" I froze in my tracks, mouth open in astonishment.

"Is there really more to life than this?" I wondered.

Up until this time, my concept of heaven had actually seemed pretty boring. Somehow the idea of people dressed in white robes, sitting on clouds with their feet hanging over the side and playing a harp for thousands of years never appealed to me.

I thought I would rather keep on with my way of life, having as much fun as I could.

"God never intended us to live like this."

But somehow, even after I thought I had enjoyed a good time, I always ended up feeling more empty than before. And so, each night I would think of something “worse” or different to do—trying to fill the void in my life.

As a child, I had been told that Santa Claus, tooth fairies and the Easter Bunny really existed. Since they had all turned out to be myths, I won-

From the cradle to the grave, I had come to expect that life would be filled with trials, heartaches and tears.

dered why heaven should be any different. I didn't want to get my hopes up about it, anyway.

Being very impressed by the conversation I overheard about heaven, I talked to the people at Country Life about it. A lady there gave me a Bible, and I took it home. Then, because I didn't know what my brother would think, I locked myself in a room to read it.

I was 23 years old at the time, but this was only the second time in my life I had ever opened a Bible. The first time had been when I opened my mother's large family Bible one day as a girl. Sitting down on our blue couch, I turned to the first page and read the story of Creation. Sorry to say, I read only that one page. Then I closed the Book and put it back on the shelf. But somehow, this time was different. In the back, were Bible studies, fascinated by the topic of heaven, I just couldn't read fast enough. My eyes fell first on John 14:1-3:

Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

“Could this really be so?” I wondered. Then I saw again where the Bible said, “If it were not so I would have told you.” So I continued to read. One of the next

texts I found was Revelation 21:4, 5:

And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away. Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And He said to me, ‘Write, for these words are true and faithful.’”

Upon reading these words, my eyes swelled with tears, and my heart began to fill with hope.

“Can this really be true?” I asked myself again. Then, “Oh, God! Please let it be true.”

I started to wonder if maybe, just maybe, I might someday smile

again—even enjoy my life. That I might break out of this heavy depression, maybe even have a reason to live. Up until that moment, I had wondered whether the sun would ever shine through my clouds of despair. And I couldn't imagine a place with no tears. From the cradle to the grave, I had come to expect that life would be filled with trials, heartaches and tears.

But I found other wonderful verses that night, verses of comfort and hope, such as:

Revelation 21:1, 2 (NKJV)

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Revelation 21:10-18, 21-27 (NKJV)

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God. Her light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: three gates on the east, three gates on the north, three gates on the south, and three gates on the west. Now the wall

of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked with me had a gold reed to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city is laid out as a square; its length is as great as its breadth. And he measured the city with the reed: twelve thousand furlongs. Its length, breadth, and height are equal. Then he measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel. The construction of its wall was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like clear glass. . . . The twelve gates were twelve pearls: each individual gate was of one pearl. And the street of the city was pure gold, like transparent glass. But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light. And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it. Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there). And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations unto it. But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

“Could this all be true?” I wondered. I had grown up in a family of ten children who worked hard from sunup till sundown on a farm we never owned. I felt life was never really fair. That some people were born into wealth, while others had to “slave away” their whole life. Then I saw some who, after years of planning and finally building their own home, were snatched away by an earthquake, famine or flood. And life just didn't make sense to me.

“We are born into this world without asking to be here,” I had thought. “Then, though it's never easy work, we have to make the most of it, and enjoy what we can, until we grow old and die.

“Can there really be a heaven like this to look forward to?” I asked myself over and over again. Then the words of John 14:2 kept coming

back to me: "If it were not so, I would have told you."

Then I read how the eyes of the blind would be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. The lame would leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb would sing. For waters would break forth in the wilderness, and streams come out of the desert.

There would be no more hospitals, for, as helpful as they now are, they will not be needed then. No more clinics, drug stores, dentists, morgues, funeral parlors, ambulances, wailing sirens or cemeteries.

I also read how Jesus received a glorious body at His resurrection, and that we will too. He was not some sort of spirit or ghost—and we won't be either.

When Jesus rose from the dead, He was recognized by His voice, manner, characteristics and physical features. Which is also how we will recognize our loved ones in heaven. Excitement and hope began to build in my heart as I thought of my large and rather extended family.

"I need to tell them these things," I said to myself. I knew that because they had never been to church; they didn't know these things either. I was very eager to share, yet still I read on:

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree, so shall be the days of my people, and My elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labor in vain, nor bring forth children for trouble; for they shall be the descendants of the blessed of the LORD, and their offspring with them. It shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear (Isa. 65:21-24).

The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The

nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea (Isa. 11:6-9).

A smile crossed my face, and I understood more of God's love when I read that there would actually be animals in heaven. It touched my heart to know that God wants to give us gifts—the things that make us happy and bring us joy. That He delights to give good gifts to His children. Even though there would be horses, there would be no more falls, no more runaway horses or bruises or scrapes.

I stayed in my bedroom for three or four hours that night, reading, studying and digesting the Word of God. I still didn't want my brother to know, however, for I was unsure of how he would react. All ten of us, brothers and sisters, had never discussed religion or God, and thought those who did were fanatical about it at times, and didn't want anyone ever preaching to us. So I kept that Bible hidden in my purse for the next several weeks.

I also started studying the Bible with a friend, and, through study and

Heaven will be a place where there is no more pain, where only joy is known, and where everyone can get along.

prayer, I got to know who Jesus really is and why He died on the cross. And as I did, I realized that it was for me He suffered, and that I can be with Him—plus my family and friends—forever and in a real heaven someday. Heaven will be a place where there is no more pain, where only joy is known, and where everyone can get along. In heaven, my mom could actually have her dream house someday. She wouldn't have to move again, or even work so hard anymore.

In heaven, families who had been ripped apart by death could be reunited. They could be to-

gether forever, and even get along without bitterness or dispute.

In that land, our companions will not be the vile of the earth. There will be no liars, idolaters, impure or unbelieving persons in heaven. Instead, there will be those who have overcome Satan and formed perfect characters. Every imperfection that afflicts them here has been removed through the blood of Christ. And there, in heaven, we may all be without fault before the great white throne—sharing the dignity and privileges of the angels.

As I got to know Jesus better, I realized that the best part of heaven is being with Him, and that without Christ, heaven wouldn't really be heaven.

Imagine, for a moment, that you could knock at the gate of heaven and an angel's voice would say, "Come in—you are welcome here, and all the wonderful things you've dreamed of are here. Except for Jesus, that is."

Think about it would you go in? "Judy," the friend I studied the Bible with, said, "If you choose not to be in heaven, there will be an empty spot in God's heart forever."

What a thought! Whatever suffering we have to endure on this earth will be only for a little while. But God's heart will ache throughout eternity if we are not there.

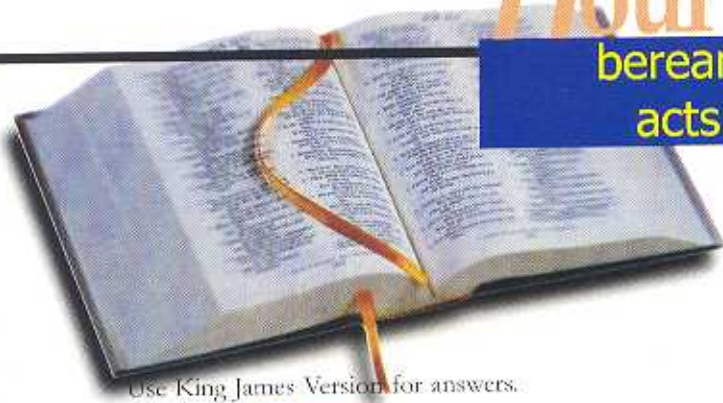
When I heard about the glories of heaven and found Jesus, it was as if a cloud of gloom was lifted from my heart. He brought a smile back into my life and gave me a hope and a future.

My desire is that you also will accept the Lord Jesus as the Lord of your life. Take time to read about His love for you. Get to know and trust Him as a personal friend. For someday soon He is coming in the clouds. We can know this, for "if it were not so, He would have told us." It is my prayer that we will all be there, and that none—no, not even one of us—will be missing. ❧

*All Bible texts are quoted from the New King James Version.

Hour Times

berean corner acts 17:11



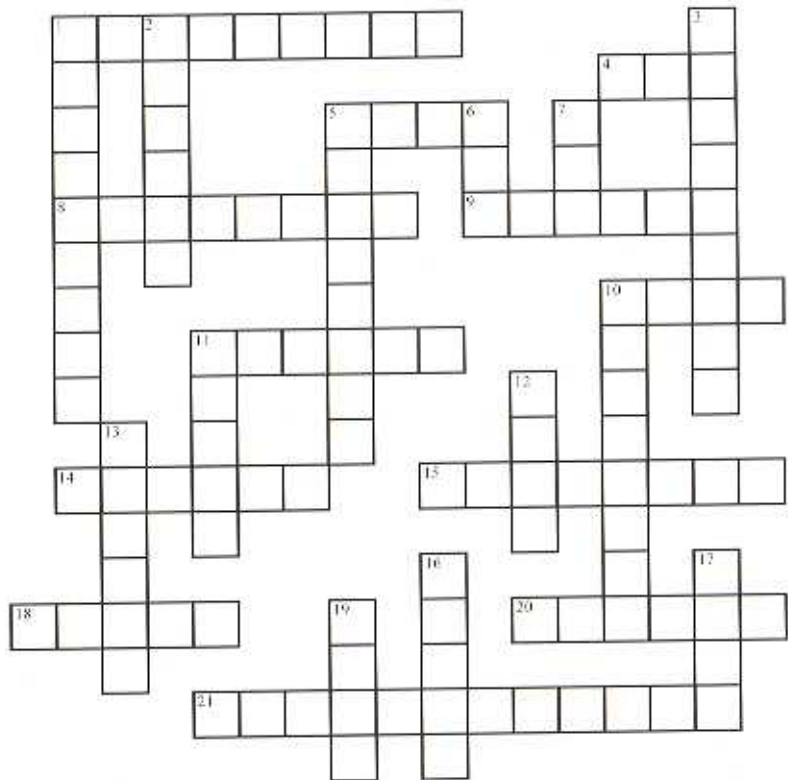
Use King James Version for answers.

Across

1. David watched her bathe from his roof (2 Samuel 11:2-3)
4. "Let not the _____ go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26)
5. If a man steals one sheep he must replace it with _____ (Exodus 22:1)
8. "I am the good _____" (John 10:14)
9. The other name of Belshazzar (Daniel 1:7)
10. Book that precedes Revelation
11. Distributed the food during the famine in Egypt (Genesis 41:55-56)
14. Original name of the promised land (Exodus 6:4)
15. "Wise as _____ and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16)
18. He said "Thou shalt never wash my feet" (John 13:8)
20. Led a army reduced from 32,000 to 300 before fighting (Judges 7:3-7)
21. "I am the _____ and the life" (John 11:25)

Down

1. Lake of fire and _____ (Revelation 20:10)
2. "Bring ye all the _____ into the storehouse" (Malachi 3:10)
3. Solomon asked God for wisdom and _____ (2 Chronicles 1:10-11)
5. Where Goliath was struck by David's stone (1 Samuel 17:49)
6. Color of Esau's hair (Genesis 25:25)
7. Baby Jesus was in a manger because there was no room in the _____ (Luke 2:7)
10. Moses' mother (Exodus 6:20)
11. Was swallowed by a great fish (Jonah 1:17)
12. God's people were to do no _____ on the Sabbath (Leviticus 23:3)
13. Banished because she refused to obey her husband (Esther 1:19)
16. "The heavens declare the _____ of God" (Psalm 19:1)
17. Wrote the book of Revelation (Revelation 1:1)
19. Known for having a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 10:1; 12:7)



Study to show thyself approved . . . rightly dividing the word of truth. 2 Tim. 2:15.

Answers

1. Bathsheba 2. Tithes 3. Wisdom 4. Wrath 5. Lamb 6. Red 7. Manger 8. Shepherd 9. Belshazzar 10. Luke 11. Joseph 12. Work 13. Haman 14. Canaan 15. Foxes 16. Works 17. John 18. Peter 19. Paul 20. Gideon 21. Light

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The Fast Lane to Hell

Photo by: Photo Disc, Getty Images

By Cari Haus

Summer vacation had just begun, and together with millions of other Americans, the "Misguided" family had planned for a little R & R on the sunny beaches of Florida. Their SUV, packed with snorkels and beach balls and surfboards, also towed a trailer loaded with jet skis. The grandma, the neighbor kid and even the dog were on board for the ride when the fully loaded vehicle pulled out of the driveway and onto a nearby freeway.

"Aren't we headed north?" chirped a cheery little voice in the back seat as Mr. Misguided jockeyed for a place to cruise on the crowded turnpike.

"Look out the window," Mr. Misguided said as he pointed to the lines of vehicles all streaming in the same direction as his SUV. Many of the men were shirtless already, all the drivers wore sunglasses and more than a few were towing speed boats, RVs, dirt bikes or jet skis.

"I see," the cheery little voice echoed above the humming engine again. "But the morning sun is on our right, which means we are headed north."

"Well, here's a sign that says we're headed south!" piped another voice from the back seat.

"Don't worry, honey," Mrs. Misguided assured her little daughter. "Your daddy looked at the map last night. He knows the way to Florida."

"Your mother is absolutely right," Mr. Misguided boomed in his deepest, most authorita-

tive voice. "I *do* know the way." And so the family cruised on, for hours on end, heading (or so they thought) for the sunny southern shores of the "orange state." It was late that night when the Misguideds finally pulled into their beachfront destination, but it was too dark to get a good view.

"Sure hope it warms up so we can swim tomorrow," chirped the now less-than-cheery little voice from the back seat. "Me too," sighed Mr. Misguided, as his wife, children, mother and even the dog all nodded in agreement. But it didn't warm up. In fact, the weather was downright frigid. Worse yet, the morning light brought an icy rain—and with it the realization that the "sandy beach" they had hoped to find wasn't so sandy after all. In fact, it was a mass of slippery rocks.

TIME FOR A FAMILY COUNCIL

Horrified, the Misguideds finally realized that, with millions of other travelers, they had indeed gone north. They had spent hours of their vacation time, much of their travel money and all their motel money to reach a forlorn outpost on the upper reaches of the continent. Their expected bliss had turned into a nightmare, their vacation into a "living hell."

If this story seems a little far-fetched to you, please read on. For the Bible promises us

Many who thought they were followers of Christ will wind up not in heaven, but in hell!

that exactly this scenario—millions and even billions of people landing in the wrong destination—will happen at the end of time. Against their own wishes, in direct contrast to their dreams and plans, even many who thought they were followers of Christ will wind up not in heaven, but in hell!

WORDS OF WARNING

In the sobering words of Jesus, “Wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it” (Matt. 7:13-14, NIV).

A number of refugees experienced a foretaste of this dreadful dilemma during World War II. During that time the Nazis became rather adept at changing road signs. As a re-

Of course, nobody has to “go to hell.”

sult, many following the signs toward what they thought was peace and safety were guided instead into traps—a series of deadly ambushes set up in remote areas of the country.

Our imaginary family in the story above, the Misguidededs, ended up in a barren wasteland by choosing to ignore the signs and follow the crowd. In real life, the road signs can also be confusing. Like the Nazis, the devil is rather adept at altering road signs. He wants the stream of refugees from this world to look for peace and pleasure in all the wrong places, until it is too late to turn and rechart their course.

A PRIMER ON HELL.

Of course, nobody has to “go to hell.” With the sure Word of God as a guide and a full surrender to Him, we are “captains of our own destiny.” However, if we would avoid the sad fate that the Bible predicts will happen to so many, we must know something about hell. If you’re trying to avoid a certain destination, it helps to know what it is, where it is, how to get there and (most important) how *not* to get there. Here then, for your help

and encouragement, is a biblical primer on that most dreaded of all destinations—hell.

WHAT HELL IS

According to the Bible, fire will accomplish the final eradication of sin, destruction of the wicked and cleansing of the earth. Jesus Himself predicted a time “when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe” (2 Thess. 1:7-10, NKJV).

The apostle John depicted the same terrible scene when, at the second coming of Christ, “the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (Rev. 6:15-17, NKJV).

At this time, the lost leaders of false religion will be “cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were [will be] killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse” (Rev. 19:20, 21, NKJV).

God’s Word reveals that the wicked will be totally annihilated—they shall be consumed into smoke.

And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together; and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed (Isa. 1:28).

But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke, shall they consume away (Psalm 37:20).

Hell, then, is the final punishment and destruction of the wicked and sin through fire at the end of time.

WHY HELL IS

In His great fairness, God allowed Satan thousands of years to demonstrate once and for all the horrible effects of sin. However, in His great mercy, God has also promised to put an end to the pain and suffering of sin. Of course, as long as sinners remain, there is only one way to divest this earth of sin: the perpetrators of evil must both go, and be punished. This is God’s “strange act,” for He is a lover of life—not death.

The Bible speaks of a judgment day when God will mete out either reward or punishment to each of His earthly children. In vision, the apostle John “saw a great white throne and the one who sat upon it, from whose face the earth and sky fled away, but they found no place to hide. I saw the dead, great and small, standing before God; and the Books were opened, including the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in the Books, each according to the deeds he had done. The oceans surrendered the bodies buried in them; and the earth and the underworld gave up the dead in them. Each was judged according to his deeds. And Death and Hell were thrown into the Lake of Fire. This is the Second Death—the Lake of Fire. And if anyone’s name was not found recorded in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the Lake of Fire” (Rev. 20:11-15, The Living Bible).

In the Hebrew sanctuary services, fire was used many times for “cleansing.” So it will be at the end of the world. When the fire is done, the earth will be cleansed of sin, sinners, decay and death. It will be horribly sad, no doubt. But it must be done, and it will be accomplished through the fires of hell.

WHEN HELL IS

Although some popular theologians teach that the wicked begin “sizzling” in hell the moment they die, the Bible teaches that the dead, both good and evil, are simply in the graves—awaiting the resurrection and their just reward. “Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the

resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28, 29).

God's Word reveals that the wicked dead are not called from their graves until the end of the millennium. For a thousand years the saints have been going over the records of the lost. When every mind is fully settled that God is just and did everything possible to save the lost sinners, then Jesus will return with the Holy City, resurrect the wicked host and destroy every sinner with the flames of hell. (See Rev. 20:4-9; 21:1-3.)

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished (Rev. 20:5).

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust until the day of judgment to be punished (2 Peter 2:9).

WHERE HELL IS

A careful reading of the Bible passages above will show clearly that hell, or the "lake of fire," takes place

The Bible teaches that hell will have an end, and that God will thoroughly destroy the evidence of sin.

on this earth. Note that the wicked are raised from their graves, which are on this earth. And they certainly don't ascend anywhere, for the Bible says they are thrown in the "lake of fire." Here is the clear Bible sequence: God returns to this earth at the end of the thousand years and raises the wicked dead for judgment and to meet their reward. The judgment, destruction of the wicked by hellfire, and the final destruction of death itself, then, all take place on this earth.

HOW LONG HELL LASTS

The Bible teaches that hell will have an end, and that God will thoroughly destroy the evidence of sin.

Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it (Isa. 47:14).

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall

burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble; and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts (Mal. 4:1, 3).

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burned up (2 Peter 3:10).

Contrary to popular opinion, the Bible does not teach that hellfire will be "everlasting." According to Greenfield's Greek Word Dictionary: forever and everlasting are relative terms meaning "a life," "a lifetime." (See the examples given in Gen. 44:32, Deut. 15:17, 2 Kings 5:27.)

According to the Bible, sinners will suffer the horrible torments of hell until they have paid justly for all the wickedness committed during their lifetime (rather than being consumed in a moment). (See Matt. 13:38-42, 49; Luke 12:46-48.) Sinners will be everlastingly destroyed, and the results of the consuming fires will be forever and ever. Sin will not rise again.

WHO WILL BE IN HELL?

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John tells us that "outside the city are those who have strayed away from God, and the sorcerers and the immoral and murderers and idolators, and all who love to lie, and do so" (Rev. 22:15, The Living Bible). In other words, those who, for whatever reason, are far from God or love to persist in sin.

HOW NOT TO GET THERE

There is no better text to answer this question than John 3:16:

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:16, 17).

When we understand, truly understand, this text, we will know that Jesus has already been "to hell and back" for us. That hell, in addition to being burned by fire, is also the experience of being all alone, in total darkness and agony of soul, without hope and eternally separated from God. You see, hell is the second-death experience that Jesus went through in the Garden of Gethsemane—when He actually sweat great drops of blood.

Taunted by Satan and the wicked angels, with the weight of the world's sins upon Him, bearing the risk of failure and being eternally lost, His life was crushed out. That's why He fell to the ground, dying, in the Garden of Gethsemane. If the angel Gabriel had not come to strengthen Him to drink the bitter cup, Jesus would not have lived to go through the agonies of Calvary.

As Jesus hung upon the cruel cross, naked and beaten nearly to death, He could not see through the portals of the tomb. He felt the guilt of every sin—as if He were guilty of every crime ever committed by any sinner! Feeling alone and utterly forsaken—even by His Heavenly Father—He cried in agony, "My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?" (Mark 15:34). The physical pain of the cross was entirely secondary to the utter agony of soul He was experiencing. The thought of being eternally separated from His Father crushed out His life—He died of a broken heart!

Yes, Jesus went through the second death, or the experience of hell, for you and me, for there was no other way that you and I could be saved. And today He stands at the door of your heart and knocks, offering you His Word as a sure "road map" to a better life. He wants to speak to you through prayer, to throw His arm around your shoulders and guide you safely through this journey of life. And He wants to see you safe at last—living eternally in a literal heaven, eating literal food and spending time with your literal friends. Won't you make a commitment to Jesus and heaven—today? ☒



Rest

By Vicki B. Griffin, Ph.D., MACN, Author, Lecturer, Researcher

SLEEPER THAN EVER!

Americans are suffering from daytime sleepiness so pervasive that it interferes with their daily activities, according to experts at the National Sleep Foundation. According to their surveys, 40% of adults say that they are so sleepy during the day that it interferes with their daily activities. For example, drowsy driving causes 100,000 crashes in the U.S. each year. Sixty percent of children under the age of 18 complain of being tired during the day, with 15% falling asleep at school on a regular basis. A full 62% of Americans experience problems falling asleep several nights a week, with smokers and alcohol users experiencing the highest frequency of sleep-related problems.

SLEEP—THE LAST THING ON THE LIST?

Is getting to bed on time on your list of important things to do each day? "Burning the midnight oil" may be burning you out—in more ways than one! Michael Irwin, a psychiatrist at the San Diego Veterans Affairs Medical Center, and his team, studied 23 healthy men, age 22 to 61, who spent 4 nights in a sleep laboratory. It was found that even modest levels of sleep deprivation resulted in a 30 percent drop in immune function. Returning to normal sleep patterns restored immunities. God made the beasts to go out after dark—not people! "Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of

the forest do creep forth." Ps. 104:20.

EARLY TO BED, EARLY TO RISE....

Is it true that early-to-bed, early-to-rise, makes a person healthy, wealthy, and wise? Even though this saying is not in the Bible, there is a similar truth laid out by our Creator: "The sun ariseth. . . . Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening." Ps. 104:22-23. Science confirms this simple truth: Dr. Thomas Weir, head of the clinical psychobiology branch of the National Institute of Mental Health, is conducting some interesting studies to see whether people who follow the "early-to-bed, early-to-rise" maxim are actually gaining health benefits. So far, his studies have shown that sleeping in a "dusk-to-dawn" pattern as opposed to late bedtime and late rising actually causes an increase in the brain's production of melatonin. Melatonin is a hormone produced in the pineal gland that is implicated in the regulation of sleep, mood, puberty and ovarian cycles. Melatonin insufficiency may be involved in such disorders as chronic fatigue, insomnia and jet lag, lethargy and fatigue in night workers, depression and even suicide.

YOUR INSTRUCTIONS ARE SEALED

We read in the book of Job: "When deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed; then He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instructions." Job 33:15-16. It is in deep sleep, during the hours before midnight, that information learned during the day is transferred from the hippocampus area of the brain (short-term memory bank), to the permanent storage area of the neocortex. Research suggests that deep, uninterrupted sleep is when the majority of memory storage takes place in the brain. In a study published in *Science*, researchers reported that deep sleep is critically important to the learning process, and that people tend to absorb knowledge about new skills while sleeping. In the words of the researchers, "We and others have found that an improvement in perceptual performance occurs neither during or immediately after practice of a procedure, but rather eight to 10 hours after a training session has ended."

SLEEPY TIME IS NOT WASTED TIME

Many people not only go to bed late but they also get up early, catching naps in order to "keep going." But according to some researchers, fragmented sleep may be worse than a bout of no sleep at all, in terms of motor skills, mood and cognitive ability. According to a 1990 National Commission for Sleep Disorders Research re-

Fast Facts

- **A child drinking a 12-oz. Caffeinated soda has a caffeine intake, on a body weight basis, equal to that of an adult drinking four cups of instant coffee. *Abundant Health*, 1991.**
- **Scientists say a regular dose of "lifestyle physical activity", like brisk walking or raking leaves, can improve health as much as agonizing gut-busting gym workouts and may be enough to reduce heart disease risk, improve blood pressure and control weight and moods. *JAMA* 1999 Jan.**

port, Americans on average get 20% less sleep than their counterparts did a century ago. The different phases of sleep that occur during the night restore the relationship between the nervous system and muscles, glands, immune and other body systems, as well as maintaining learning, reasoning and emotional balance.

REMEMBER THE FABULOUS FOUR

Don't cheat yourself out of sleep. There are four essentials to establishing good sleep habits. First, quantity. The average person needs eight to nine hours of sleep daily. This is essential for proper immune function, tissue repair, nervous system and hormone balance. Children and teenagers need more. Second, regularity. Having a set bedtime and rising time as well as set times for eating, exercise, study and work, helps your body to establish regular bio-rhythms, which reduce cancer risk and normalize hormone metabolism. Third, timing. As mentioned before, an early-to-bed pattern of sleeping enhances learning, mood, overall health and childhood development. Fourth, quality. Ever sleep a long time and wake up tired? There are a number of factors that can interfere with quality sleep. Eating late, sugary foods, lack of regular exercise, smoking and the use of caffeinated beverages or drugs can seriously impair the quality of sleep. Certain prescription drugs, including sleeping pills and anti-depressants, can cause sleep problems. Also stress, television, harsh music and bright lights at night can work to reset the body's inner clock to late-night wakefulness and diminish quality sleep. Anger and guilt can destroy peaceful sleep. Someone once said, "A clear conscience makes a soft pillow." Hanging onto

"A clear conscience makes a soft pillow."

grudges and anger robs us of inner peace, which is essential to sound sleep. Perhaps that is why the Bible tells us not to let the sun go down on our wrath, but as far as possible, "be at peace among yourselves." 1 Thess. 5:13

PUT SLEEP ON YOUR LIST OF PRIORITIES

Your Creator and Savior understands your need of sleep, and He will help you plan it into your lifestyle. In this troubled and perplexing world, our Savior is interested in our sleep habits: "It is vain for you to sit up late. . . . He giveth His beloved sleep." Ps. 127:2. It was Jesus who, pressed with cares and an urgent mission, told his weary disciples, "Come ye yourselves apart...and rest awhile." Mark 6:31. Jesus invites all of us who are weary of sin to come to Him for rest from our sinful ways. He wants us to find spiritual rest from our heavy burden of sin, perplexity and sorrow. He also invites us to plan refreshing, restoring physical rest into our lives—and with His help, we can achieve both essentials—spiritual and physical rest! ⌚

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recipes

GARBANZO-SPINACH

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 lbs. Pasta (your choice), cooked
- 2 C Chopped, fresh spinach, in a pan
OR 6 oz. frozen, chopped spinach
- 3 C Cooked garbanzo beans
- 1 Qt Tomato sauce
- 1 1/2 Qts Tomatoes, canned, chopped
- 5 Garlic cloves
- 3 Tb Olive oil (optional)
- 1 1/2 Tb Italian seasoning
- 1/2 Tb Basil
- 1 tsp Veg. salt or regular salt to taste

Directions:

- Grind or crush all garlic.

- Simmer garlic in a little water for a few minutes.
- Add ALL ingredients (except pasta).
- Simmer for approximately 1 hour.
- Serve over pasta.
- Top with nutritional yeast flakes.
- Tastes even better the next day.
- Serves 12

Serving Suggestions:

- For a nice change, replace spinach with zucchini slices.
- Instead of using pasta, put it over French rolls. Just cut the rolls lengthwise and scoop out some of the bread and fill it with the recipe. Then, top it all with nutritional yeast flakes. Talk about GOOOOOD!



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Is Jimmy an Angel?



Photo by PQ Design

By Kay Collins

Turned on the Cable News Network as the memorial service was in progress in Littleton, Colorado. Our entire nation and many abroad empathized in the grief of the Columbine High School tragedy. Several of the speakers, addressing the thousands attending the memorial service, endeavored to allay some of the grief by picturing the brave teacher and students who had been killed as now being in the courts of heaven.

I especially remember the words of one individual: "I firmly believe," he said, recounting the scene in the library where one young girl died for avowing her faith in Jesus, "at the moment of death, she was immediately taken into the presence of God."

Another student, who had been greatly blessed by the spiritual influence of the same teenage girl, said she knew

her friend was now an angel and would be watching over her. Many of the other students, pastors, priests and political leaders expressed similar views.

A few weeks later tragedy struck when several firemen lost their lives. During the memorial service for these brave heroes, the grieving children were told that when they

were involved in sports, their fathers would be there to cheer them on—that their fathers, though not visible, would also be standing proudly by to see their achievements. Whenever they were lonely, or in trouble, the children were told just to talk to their fathers—for they would be there to counsel or comfort them.

Indeed, several television programs (such as *Touched by an Angel* and *Highway to Heaven*) portray individuals who have died, gone to heaven and returned to Earth to comfort, counsel, guide and protect those in need.

Death had come to my family also. For sixty-five years, Jimmy had brought joy to those he was around. Jimmy's life was not easy, for he was born with Down's Syndrome. But he was always cheerful and helpful. He loved Jesus and could sing hymns by the hour. But now he was gone!

Is Jimmy an angel? Is he rejoicing in the presence of God? Can he come to Earth and visit his grieving family—or help us if we're in trouble?

Perhaps you too have lost someone dear to your heart, and you are searching for answers. Let's allow God's Word to clear up our questions regarding death, for this subject must be clearly understood to protect us from accepting the deceptions of Satan.

Question: Are my loved ones who have passed away aware of what is going on in my

Perhaps you too have lost someone dear to your heart, and you are searching for answers.

life? Can I receive comfort, help or wisdom from the deceased?

Answer: *"For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything"* (Eccl. 9:5). *"There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave"* (Eccl. 9:10).

Question: My deceased was not a Christian. Is he or she looking down from heaven now, praising the Lord?

Answer: *"The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence"* (Ps. 115:17).

"For the grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee, . . . The living, the living, he shall praise Thee" (Isa. 38:18, 19).

"For David is not ascended into the heavens" (Acts 2:34). No, not even King David—the apple of God's eye—is in heaven. He is awaiting the call of the Lifegiver.

Question: I know people who say their dead loved one appeared to them. Is this true—or was it a deception from Satan?

Answer: *"So he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him anymore"* (Job 7:9, 10).

Question: If the Bible teaches that our dead loved ones are not angels, but are asleep in their graves, who are the angels, and what is their work in behalf of the human family?

Answer: Angels, seraphim and cherubim are created beings. Lucifer, the covering cherub, the highest angel that stood in the very presence of God, allowed jealousy and envy to enter his heart. Aspiring to be like God, he sowed the seeds of distrust and rebellion among the heavenly angels.

In his rebellion, Satan took one third of the angels with him when he became the adversary, the devil, and was cast out to this earth. Since Adam and Eve yielded to Satan, the human race has been plagued by their demonic powers and deceptions. (Please read Eze. 28:14, 15, Isa. 14:12-14, and Rev. 12:7-9.)

Our safety is found in surrender

to Christ and being shielded by the heavenly angels. (For a better understanding of the wonderful work these sinless beings do in your life, please read Heb. 1:14; Pss. 103:20, 34:7, 91:9-11; and Daniel 6:22.)

Question: If an angel appears to me, how can I tell whether the angel is from God or Satan? Is there a biblical test?

Answer: It's true that angels—both good and evil—can appear to us. (See Gen. 18 and 19, also Num. 22:22-35.) After 40 days of fasting in the wilderness, when He was perishing from hunger, Jesus Himself was approached by an "angel of light." Jesus met the temptations of this mighty angel, who turned out to

Like Jesus, our only safety when confronted with the supernatural is in trusting the sure Word of God.

be the devil himself, with a firm *"It is written."* (Read the Bible account in Matt. 4:1-11.)

Like Jesus, our only safety when confronted with the supernatural is in trusting the sure Word of God. The prophet Isaiah warned us not to trust in spiritualistic mediums such as New Age channelers, ministers or any others who propose to be in communication with the dead. If anyone's teachings are not in harmony with the Word of God, "there is no light in them." (See Isa. 8:19, 20; also 2 Cor. 11:14-15.)

By trusting God's Word, we shall be safe from all the powerful deceptions of Satan and his demonic forces. Let us settle it forever in our minds that our deceased loved ones are not angels; for, before the first human ever died, angels were sent to guard the tree of life in the Garden of Eden. (See Gen. 3:22-24.)

The Bible tells us that in the last days, just before the coming of Jesus, Satan will employ all his supernatural powers to deceive. By mighty miracles and almost overpowering deceptions, he will en-

deavor to seduce God's people. If you have lost a loved one and find that familiar form appearing to you, you will be safe from this powerful delusion *only* if you trust the biblical statement that "the dead know not anything" (Eccl. 9:5).

AN AWESOME DREAM

When I was just a young girl, I had an awesome dream. I dreamed it was the end of all things! The surface of the earth was torn apart by a mighty earthquake; jagged rocks and dead bodies lay everywhere! Meanwhile, the sky was aglow with a glorious light, and I could see Jesus coming in the clouds with all His angels. The graves of the righteous were broken open, and the children of God were being caught up to meet Jesus in the air.

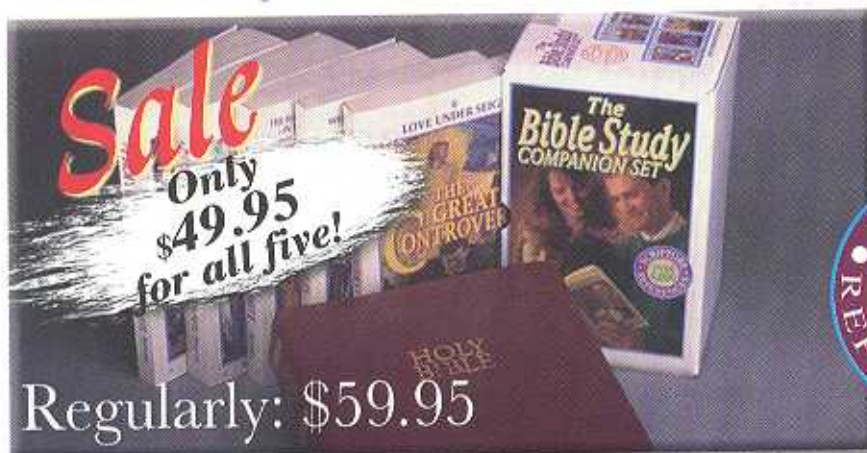
As I gazed upon the awesome scene, I saw Jimmy rising up in the clouds to meet his dearest Friend. I could recognize him—though all the marks of his former handicap were gone. His face radiated joy, and I awoke with such peace. In my heart I knew that my special brother, Jimmy, would be resurrected and taken to heaven when Jesus returns for His own.

No, Jimmy is not an angel. He is sleeping in the grave—awaiting the call of Jesus who is "the Resurrection and the Life." As I personalize 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, I am assured that "the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: . . . [and Jimmy, along with all the others who are dead in Christ, shall rise first:] then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

These are the promises God has given to you and to me to comfort us when we lose a loved one in death. So, while those who fall asleep trusting in Jesus are not angels, each one is guarded, as a precious jewel, by the angels of God. ❧

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